



1,000 Tenants Demand End to Vacancy Decontrol

By Ann Meisinger

Housing is a right, not a privilege!” Laverne Holly’s call roared across the room, and a thousand tenants cheered back. Holly, of the New York City AIDS Housing Network, voiced the outrage and passion of thousands of tenants across New York who have seen the decimation of the state’s rent-regulation system.

On Dec. 9, a thousand tenants, housing advocates, elected officials, union members, and clergy gathered to call for the end of vacancy decontrol, a loophole that has let landlords take thousands of apartments out of rent regulations. The crowd filled the Society for Ethical Culture on Central Park West.

The rally was emceed by Pat Boone of ACORN and Gladys Puglia of Make the Road NY. It was organized by the Housing Here and Now coalition, which plans to follow it up with a lobbying trip to Albany on Jan. 27.

“We need to get to the root cause of why so many landlords in our neighborhoods are tearing up whole communities for the sake of the almighty dollar,” East Harlem tenant leader Ann Bragg, of Community Voices Heard, told the packed auditorium. “We are here to end vacancy decontrol. This law was written by landlords, but it will be erased by us, the tenants!”

Through vacancy decontrol, landlords can take an empty apartment out of the rent-regulation system when they raise the rent to \$2,000. It encourages harassment of tenants, fake improvements, and illegal rent increases, all to hit that \$2,000 threshold as quickly as possible.

Vacancy decontrol is the single biggest threat to af-

fordable housing in New York. Housing Here and Now estimates the city has lost 50,000 affordable apartments to vacancy decontrol in the last three years, with another 100,000 on the verge of deregulation.

“Vacancy decontrol not only affects individual tenants,” explained Ramona Santana of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, speaking in Spanish. “It displaces entire communities from affordable housing, and forces low-income people to leave their homes and communities.”

The rally was part of a broader campaign to end vacancy decontrol and defend New York’s affordable housing. It followed pro-



The Rude Mechanical Orchestra plays for rent reform.

tests in each borough last spring and an Oct. 1 rally in Harlem organized by the Real Rent Reform Coalition. It also came soon after the Democrats were elected into the majority of the New York State Senate, creating the first opportunity in decades for real tenant wins in Albany.

Housing Here and Now is coordinating a major lobbying effort to pressure the state Senate to repeal vacancy decontrol early in the 2009 session. If it succeeds, it would be the first major win for New York tenants in state law

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Chelsea Residents Tell Paterson: Don’t Cut the Budget, Tax the Rich

By Steven Wishnia

With New York State facing a \$15 billion budget deficit—the worst since the Depression, says Assemblymember Richard Gottfried— Governor David Paterson has turned in a budget that looks as if it could have come from George Pataki.

The governor’s proposal, released Dec. 16, includes major reductions in Medicaid and aid to education, and state workers will face layoffs and wage freezes. It includes 150 new or higher taxes and fees, including a \$600 increase in tuition at state and city universities—but it would not raise taxes on the rich.

Katharine Roberts, 82, a senior-citizen activist from Penn South, calls the budget “god-awful.” Cristina Rodriguez, a 19-year-old college student, says it’s unfair that the state is cutting Medicaid and raising transit fares “at the same time as the Wall Street

bailout.”

The two were among about 100 people who attended a forum on the budget in Chelsea Dec. 8. It was sponsored by Gottfried and his fellow Chelsea Democrat state Sen. Tom Duane, and took place in at the Hudson Guild’s auditorium in the Fulton Houses.

The crisis is genuine, said Gottfried. New York has a \$1.7 billion shortfall for the next three months and a \$13.8 billion deficit for the fiscal year that begins April 1. The \$15.5 billion total amounts to one-eighth of the state’s annual budget. More telling, Gottfried added, is that the deficit is a fourth of the money the state collects by itself—money that mainly goes to education and health care. And as the economy slumps and people lose jobs, expenses for Medicaid and unemployment insurance go up

while tax revenue drops.

Unlike the 1970s fiscal crisis, this one is nationwide, said James Parrott of the Fiscal Policy Institute: 44 states are facing deficits. But New York has been particularly hard hit, as one-fifth of the state’s share of revenues comes from the financial-services industry.

The crisis is genuine, but Paterson’s solution is unfair, Parrott said. Though the governor talks a lot about “shared sacrifice,” Parrott continued, he “has really spared the people at the top.” More than half the proposed cuts in spending are in health care and education, and the Battery Park City surplus earmarked for affordable housing will instead be used to reduce the deficit. New state workers will get lower pensions, reducing their retirement pay below the \$17,000 a year that current state workers

average, he said.

“Why is the governor afraid to ask the well-to-do to pay their fair share?” Parrott asked.

About 450,000 taxpayers in New York reported incomes of more than \$200,000 last year, the Fiscal Policy Institute says. The richest 5 percent of residents make 42 percent of the state’s income. But they will only bear 3 percent of the burden of the proposed new taxes and

budget cuts, the group estimates.

New York State’s current top income-tax rate, 6.85 percent, applies to all income over \$40,000 a year. If the state raised taxes on income over \$250,000, with a new top rate of 10.3 percent on income over \$1 million, it would bring in an extra \$5 billion a year, says the Center for Work-

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State Senator Joseph Addabbo: 'Tenants' Rights Are Very Important'

By Joe Catron and Louise Seeley

Tenants and housing advocates wonder how the Democrats winning control of the state Senate will affect housing policies in New York. The race that decided that change was Councilmember Joseph Addabbo unseating Republican incumbent Serphin Maltese in Queens. In early December, Louise Seeley, executive director of the City-Wide Task Force on Housing Court, and former Met Council organizer Joe Catron, who was working for City-Wide, sat down with Addabbo to ask him his views on housing issues.

"Tenants' rights and tenants issues are very, very important and historically not attended to," Addabbo said. "That was one of the main reasons I was running for the state Senate, because many of our tenants who live in rent-stabilized and rent-controlled apartments really didn't have an advocate for

years. Hopefully now they will."

Q: How can we expect new Democratic State Senate majority to influence state housing policy?

A: I think the Democratic platform historically and traditionally has been about the working class, and part of that platform is housing. So with a Democratic-controlled Senate, I am hoping for not only more transparency and accountability to the people we represent, but administrative decision that affect housing in a more positive way. Housing is going to be tied into the economic crisis, and there will be tough cuts on the city and state level, but we need to protect core services. Housing is of utmost importance not only to people in my district, but to people throughout the state. I think the focus on housing shifts with a Democratic majority. It now comes to the forefront, where in the past it was on the back burner.

Do you think we can see a repeal of vacancy decontrol this session?

Hopefully. We do have an economic situation and the budget to deal with. But vacancy decontrol

has strong ties to the economic situation. If we can tell residents we are going to protect their place of living, that helps. I am hoping that once we get started to work in January, we can push some priority-agenda items like vacancy decontrol, while working simultaneously on the budget. I would hate to see the budget take up all of our time, because that would leave us very little time to do the legislative work we have to do.

Something that has a little less activity is the Urstadt law. Do you see any action on that in immediate future?

I am less optimistic about Urstadt reform with the economic climate, but I could see it coming up after the budget is done. I would think there is a good amount of state legislators who are willing to start looking at it seriously now.

What is your top housing priority going into your first year?

Housing affects different areas of the state differently. In my district, protecting tenants' rights and protecting their rent is obviously a segment of housing issues that I want to work on.

That we can talk about increasing the number of affordable units in large developments like Willets Point is a step in the right direction.

I knocked on your in-laws' door, and they said they were voting for you. Do you have any idea about how vacancy decontrol has affected neighborhoods like theirs?

That is how I first learned about the problem. When I was first dating my wife, years ago, I overheard a conversation my in-laws had about their state senator not supporting them, and siding with the landlords. They were in fear of their rent going up and of actually losing their controlled apartment. I asked them to explain. I was a Councilmember at the time, but I was so interested in how an elected official couldn't stand with their tenants, their constituents, and side with the landlords, many of whom don't live in the district. So the first inclination that something needed to be done on that level was from my in-laws, while I was dating my wife.



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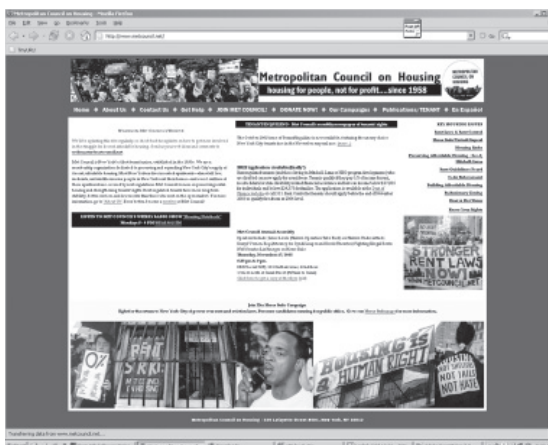
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EL INQUILINO HISPANO

Mil inquilinos exigen fin del descontrol de viviendas disponibles

Por Ann Meisinger
Traducido por Lightning Translations

“¡La vivienda es un derecho, no un privilegio!” El grito de Laverne Holly retumbó por la sala y mil inquilinos le hicieron eco. Holly, de la Red de Vivienda para Enfermos de SIDA de la Ciudad de Nueva York (New York City AIDS Housing Network), expresó la indignación y pasión de miles de inquilinos en toda Nueva York, que han presenciado la debilitación del sistema estatal de regulación de alquileres.

El 9 de diciembre, mil inquilinos, defensores de vivienda, funcionarios elegidos, miembros de sindicatos y cleros se reunieron para hacer un llamado por el fin del descontrol de viviendas disponibles, lo cual es un resquicio legal que ha permitido a los caseros remover miles de apartamentos de las regulaciones de alquiler. La multitud llenó la Sociedad para la Cultura Ética (Society for Ethical Culture) en la calle Central Park West.

La manifestación fue presidida

por Pat Boone de ACORN y Gladys Puglia de Se Hace el Camino NY (Make the Road NY). Fue organizada por la coalición Vivienda Aquí y Ahora (Housing Here and Now), que planea seguirla con un viaje de cabildeo a Albany el 27 de enero.

“Necesitamos llegar a la raíz del porqué tantos caseros en nuestros vecindarios están destruyendo comunidades enteras por el dólar todopoderoso”, dijo el líder de inquilinos de East Harlem Ann Bragg, de Voces de la Comunidad Oídas (Community Voices Heard), a la sala atiborrada. “Estamos aquí para poner fin al descontrol de viviendas disponibles. Esta ley fue escrita por caseros, pero será borrada por nosotros, los inquilinos!”

Por medio del descontrol de viviendas disponibles, los caseros pueden remover un apartamento del sistema de regulación de alquileres al alzar el alquiler a \$2,000. Esto alienta el hosti-

gamiento de inquilinos, mejoramientos falsos y aumentos de alquiler ilegales, todos destinados a llegar al umbral de \$2,000 lo más pronto posible.

El descontrol de viviendas disponibles es la mayor amenaza a la vivienda asequible en la Ciudad de Nueva York. Vivienda Aquí y Ahora estima que la ciudad ha perdido 50,000 apartamentos asequibles en los últimos tres años a causa del descontrol de viviendas disponibles, con 100,000 unidades más al borde de la desregulación.

“El descontrol de vacancia [de viviendas disponibles] no solamente afecta a los inquilinos individuales”, explicó Ramona Santana de la Coalición de la Comunidad y Cleros del Noroeste del Bronx (Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition), quien habló en español. “Desaloja a comunidades completas de viviendas económicas, y hace que personas de poco ingreso tengan

que dejar sus viviendas y comunidad”.

La manifestación fue parte de un plan más amplio para poner fin al descontrol de viviendas disponibles y defender viviendas asequibles en Nueva York. Siguió manifestaciones en todos los condados la primavera pasada y una manifestación en Harlem el 1o de octubre, organizada por la Coalición de Reforma de Rentas Real (Real Rent Reform Coalition). Además, tuvo lugar poco después de que los demócratas fueron elegidos como mayoría del senado estatal de Nueva York, lo que ha creado la primera oportunidad en décadas para victorias reales por parte de los inquilinos.

Vivienda Aquí y Ahora está coordinando un esfuerzo de cabildeo importante para presionar al senado estatal a revocar el descontrol de viviendas disponibles al principio de la sesión de 2009. Si

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Los Ajustes de la “Junta de Regulación de Renta” de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 40)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 2007 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2008.

Renovación de Contrato

Los caseros tienen que ofrecer a los inquilinos de renta estabilizada una renovación de contrato dentro de 90 a 120 días antes de que venza su contrato actual. La renovación de contrato tiene que mantener los mismos términos y condiciones que el contrato que vencerá, excepto cuando refleje un cambio en la ley. Una vez que se haya recibido el ofrecimiento de renovación, los inquilinos tienen 60 días para aceptarlo y escoger si van a renovar el contrato por uno o dos años. El propietario tiene que devolver la copia firmada y fechada al inquilino dentro de 30 días. La nueva renta no entrará en vigencia hasta que empiece el nuevo contrato, o cuando el propietario devuelva la copia firmada (lo que suceda después). Ofrecimientos retrasados: si el casero ofrece la renovación tarde (menos de 90 días antes de que venza el contrato actual), el contrato puede empezar, a la opción del inquilino, o en la fecha que hubiera empezado si se hubiera hecho un ofrecimiento a tiempo, o en el primer pago de renta fechada 90 días después de la fecha del ofrecimiento del contrato. Las pautas de renta usadas para la renovación no pueden ser mayores que los incrementos de la RGB vigentes en la fecha en que el contrato debía empezar (si se lo hubiera ofrecido a tiempo). El inquilino no tiene que pagar el nuevo aumento de renta hasta 90 días después de que se haya hecho el ofrecimiento.

Asignación de Subarriendo

Los caseros podrán cobrar un aumento de 10 por ciento durante el término de subarriendo que comience durante este

período de las pautas.

Programa de Exención de Incrementos de Renta para las Personas de Mayor Edad Las personas de mayor edad con renta estabilizada (y los que viven en apartamentos de renta controlada, Mitchell-Lama y cooperativas de dividendos limitados), con 62 años o más, y cuyos ingresos familiares disponibles al año sean de \$27,000 o menos (para 2006) y que paguen (o enfrenten un aumento de renta que les haría pagar) un tercio o más de tal ingreso en renta pueden ser elegibles para una congelación de renta. Solicite a: NYC Dept of the Aging, SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007 o llame al 311 o visite su sitio Web, nyc.gov/

html/dfta/html/scrie_sp/scrie_sp.shtml.

Programa de Exención de Incrementos de Renta para Minusválidos

Inquilinos con renta regulada que reciben ayuda económica elegible relacionada con discapacidad, que tengan ingresos de \$17,580 o menos para individuales y \$25,212 o menos para una pareja y enfrenten rentas iguales o más de un tercio de sus ingresos pueden ser elegibles para un congelamiento de renta. Solicite a: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. Llame al 311 para una solicitud o vaya al sitio Web en www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/

property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml

Las unidades desvanes

Los aumentos legalizados para unidades de desván son un 2.5 por ciento por un contrato de un año y 5.25 por ciento por dos años. No se permiten incrementos para las unidades de desván vacías.

Hoteles y SROs

4.5% para todas categorías, sin embargo, 0% cuando menos de un 85% de las unidades sean ocupadas por inquilinos permanentes de renta regulada.

Exceso de cobro

Los inquilinos deben estar al tanto de que muchos caseros se aprovecharán de las complejidades de estas pautas y concesiones adicionales, además del poco conocimiento de los inquilinos del historial de renta de sus apartamentos, para cobrar una renta ilegal. Los inquilinos pueden impugnar los aumentos de renta sin autorización en las cortes

o al presentar una impugnación con la agencia estatal de vivienda, la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunitaria (Division of Housing and Community Renewal, DHCR). El primer paso en el proceso es ponerse en contacto con la DHCR para ver el registro oficial del historial de renta. Vaya a www.dhcr.state.ny.us o llame al 718-739-6400 y pida un historial de renta detallado. Luego, hable con un abogado o defensor experto antes de seguir.

Para las pautas previas, llame a la RGB al 212-385-2934 o vaya al www.housingnyc.com

Tipo de Contrato	Renta Legal Actual	Contrato de 1 Año	Contrato de 2 Años	
Renovación del Contrato	Todos	casero abastece la calefacción	4.5%	8.5%
		inquilino paga la calefacción	4%	8%
	Salvo donde el último contrato del apartamento vacío se firmó 6 o más años atrás y la renta es menos de \$1,000	casero abastece la calefacción	45	85
		inquilino paga la calefacción	40	80
Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos	Más de \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	16%	20%
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más un 17.25%	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar
	Menos de \$300	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	16% + \$100	20% + \$100
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, +16% + \$100	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento
	Renta de \$300 a \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	16% o \$100, lo que sea mayor	20% o \$100, lo que sea mayor
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 16%, o \$100, lo que sea mayor	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 20%,

Residentes de Chelsea dicen a Paterson: No corte el presupuesto, imponga contribuciones a los ricos

Por Steven Wishnia

Traducido por Lightning Translations

En el momento que el Estado de Nueva York se ve enfrentado por un déficit presupuestal de \$15 mil millones, el peor desde la Depresión según el asambleísta Richard Gottfried, el gobernador David Paterson ha entregado un presupuesto que parece haber provenido de George Pataki.

La propuesta del gobernador, emitida el 16 de diciembre, incluye importantes reducciones en Medicaid y ayuda a educación; los trabajadores estatales enfrentarán despidos y congelación de sueldos. También incluye 150 impuestos y pagos nuevos o elevados, incluido un aumento de cuotas de \$600 por instrucción en las universidades estatales y municipales, pero no elevaría los impuestos de los ricos.

Katharine Roberts, de 82 años de edad, una activista mayor de Penn South, llama el presupuesto "atroz". Cristina Rodríguez, una estudiante de 19 años de edad, dice que no es justo que el estado haga cortes en Medicaid y eleve la tarifa de transportación "al mismo tiempo que el rescate de Wall Street".

Las dos estaban entre alrededor de 100 personas que acudieron a un foro sobre la presupuesta en Chelsea el 8 de diciembre. El evento fue patrocinado por Gottfried y el senador estatal Tom Duane, también demócrata, y tuvo lugar en la sala del Hudson Guild en las Fulton Houses.

La crisis es genuina, dijo Gottfried. Nueva York tiene un déficit de \$1.7 mil millones para los

próximos tres meses y un déficit de \$13.8 mil millones para el año fiscal que empieza el 1o de abril. El total de \$15.5 mil millones suma una octava parte del presupuesto anual estatal. Más revelador, añadió Gottfried, es el hecho que el déficit suma una cuarta parte del dinero que el estado cobra por sí mismo, lo cual es dinero destinado en su mayoría a la educación y atención médica. Mientras la economía se desploma y la gente pierde sus empleos, los gastos de Medicaid y seguro de desempleo suben y los ingresos públicos bajan.

A diferencia de la crisis fiscal de los años 1970, ésta está ocurriendo en todo el país, dijo James Parrott del Instituto de Política Fiscal (Fiscal Policy Institute): 44 estados enfrentan déficit. Sin embargo, Nueva York ha recibido

un golpe particularmente duro, ya que una quinta parte de la porción de ingresos del estado provienen de la industria de servicios financieros.

La crisis es genuina, pero la solución de Paterson no es justa, dijo Parrott. Aunque el gobernador habla mucho de "sacrificios compartidos", continuó, "realmente ha perdonado a los de arriba".

Más de la mitad de los cortes propuestos son en atención médica y educación, mientras el superávit de Battery Park City destinado a viviendas asequibles se usará en su lugar para reducir el déficit. Los nuevos trabajadores estatales recibirán pensiones más bajas, lo cual reducirá sus ingresos de jubilación por debajo de los \$17,000

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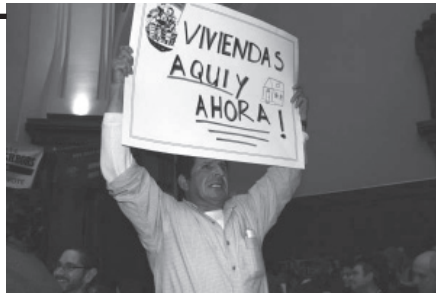
Mil inquilinos

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esto tiene éxito, sería la primera victoria importante para los inquilinos neoyorquinos en torno a las leyes estatales desde 1974.

En la manifestación del 9 de diciembre, 13 legisladores estatales prometieron fijar la revocación del descontrol de viviendas disponibles como una prioridad principal en 2009 y hablar con el liderazgo legislativo sobre su necesidad. Oímos discursos fascinantes de los senadores estatales José Serrano del Bronx, Tom Duane de Manhattan y Andrea Stewart-Cousins del condado de Westchester. Otros legisladores que firmaron la promesa son los senadores estatales Liz Krueger y Eric Schneiderman (demócratas de Manhattan), Daniel Squadron (demócrata de Brooklyn), Joe Addabbo (demócrata de Queens) y Diane Savino (demócrata de Staten Island/Brooklyn), juntos con los asambleístas Richard Gottfried y Linda Rosenthal (demócratas de Manhattan), Karim Camara y Hakeem Jeffries (demócratas de Brooklyn) y José Peralta (demócrata de Queens).

La manifestación fue organizada por una coalición amplia de grupos por justicia de vivienda y sus aliados bajo la bandera de Vivienda Aquí y Ahora. Vivienda Aquí y Ahora fue establecido hace cuatro años, uniéndose a más de 150 grupos de vivienda, organizaciones comunitarias, feligreses y sindicatos. Su comisión directiva para la manifestación incluyó a ACORN, Voces de la Comunidad Oídas, la Red de Vivienda para Enfermos de SIDA de la Ciudad de Nueva York, La Coalición de Inmigración de Nueva York (New York Immigration Coalition), la Coalición de la Comunidad y Cleros del Noroeste del Bronx, Inquilinos y Vecinos (Tenants & Neighbors) y el Partido de Familias Trabajadoras (Working Families Party). Muchos otros grupos se unieron también a los esfuerzos



de organización al movilizar a inquilinos, diseminar información y participar en la planificación de la manifestación. Éstos incluyeron el Concejo Metropolitano de Vivienda (Met Council), el Consejo Comunitario del Área Pratt (Pratt Area Community Council), Coordinadores de la Conservación de Vivienda (Housing Conservation Coordinators), la Campaña de Reforma de Rentas Real, las Caridades Católicas de Brooklyn y Queens (Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens), Maricones por Justicia Económica (Queers for Economic Justice) y Judíos por Justicia Racial y Económica (Jews for Racial and Economic Justice).

Este mes, las organizaciones que son parte de Vivienda Aquí y Ahora se reunirán con los senadores estatales que representan sus distritos para abogar por la revocación del descontrol de viviendas disponibles. La campaña se centra en 17 senadores que todavía no han expresado opiniones claras en torno al asunto. El 27 de enero, inquilinos viajarán a Albany para presionar a los legisladores, contando las historias de cómo la crisis de vivienda afecta sus vidas y vecindarios.

"Esta noche es el momento para empezar", dijo Liz Gardner de Inquilinos y Vecinos a la manifestación del 9 de diciembre. "Pregunten a sus representantes estatales y locales cuál es su opinión. Díganle al casero: 'Señor, ¡mi aumento de salario no es su dividendo!'"

Ann Meisinger es organizadora de Vivienda Aquí y Ahora. Si a usted le interesa ir a Albany el 27 de enero, llame a Danielle al (646) 202-3962.

No se quede helado: ¡ORGANÍZASE!



La ley requiere que su casero proporcione calefacción y agua caliente a las temperaturas siguientes, desde el 1ro de octubre hasta el 31 de mayo:

Desde las 6 a.m. hasta las 10 p.m.: Si la temperatura afuera es de menos de 55 grados, la temperatura adentro debe ser al menos de 68 grados en todo el apartamento.

Desde las 10 p.m. hasta las 6 a.m.: Si la temperatura afuera es de menos de 40 grados, la temperatura adentro debe ser al menos de 55 grados en todo el apartamento.

Se tiene que proporcionar agua caliente a un mínimo de 120 grados en el grifo las 24 horas del día, todo el año.

Si su casero no mantiene estas temperaturas mínimas, usted debe:

- * Comenzar una "Acción HP" (HP Action) en la Corte de Vivienda. Pida una inspección por orden de la corte y una Orden de Corrección (Order to Correct)
- * Llamar al Buro Central de Quejas (Central Control Bureau) de la ciudad de Nueva York al 311 inmediatamente, para documentar la violación del casero. Llame repetidamente. Se supone que un inspector vendrá eventualmente, aunque a veces no lo haga.
- * Exhortar a los otros inquilinos en el edificio a llamar al Central Complaint. Todos deben llamar repetidamente, al menos una vez al día, todos los días en que tengan problemas con la calefacción.
- * Comprar un buen termómetro para afuera y adentro, para documentar las fechas exactas, las horas, y las temperaturas, tanto afuera como adentro, mientras tenga problemas con la calefacción. Esta documentación es su evidencia
- * Llamar a la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunal del Estado de Nueva York (DHCR, por sus siglas en inglés) al (718) 739-6400, y pedir que le envíen el formulario de Queja de Calefacción y Agua Caliente. Llene el formulario y consiga la participación de todos los

inquilinos en su edificio que pueden firmarlo. Reclame una orden para restaurar la calefacción y el agua caliente, y que se reduzcan y congelen (¡disculpe lo de "congelen"! todas las rentas.

- * Necesitarán una fuerte asociación de inquilinos para obligar al casero a proporcionar calefacción y agua caliente. Escriban y llamen al casero para demandar reparaciones y aceite. Prepárense para una huelga de renta (sobre todo con asesoría legal)—de relámpago si es necesario.

Las leyes sobre la calefacción establecen también:

- * Que el Departamento de Reparaciones de Emergencia de la ciudad le proporcione la calefacción si el casero no lo hace. (No se siente en un bloque de hielo—otra vez, ¡disculpe!—mientras espere que lo haga.)
- * Una multa de \$250 to \$500 al casero por cada día que se produzca la violación. (Pero la verdad es que la Corte de Vivienda raras veces impone las multas, y menos aun las cobra).
- * Una multa de \$1,000 al casero si algún aparato de control automático se instala en la caldera para mantener la temperatura por debajo del mínimo legal.
- * Si el tanque de combustible de la caldera está vacío, los inquilinos tienen el derecho de comprar su propio combustible después de haber pasado 24 horas sin calefacción y también sin obtener ninguna respuesta del casero. Esto no se aplica si la caldera está rota y necesita tanto reparación como combustible.

¡Cuidado! ¡proteja su dinero! Si los inquilinos deciden comprar el combustible, hay que seguir los procedimientos legales cuidadosamente. Consiga la ayuda y el consejo de un organizador de inquilinos. La existencia de leyes de calefacción y agua caliente vigentes no garantiza que el gobierno las implemente. No se quede helado por esperar que la ciudad o el estado actúe. ¡Organízes!

Residentes de Chelsea

viene de la página 4

al año promedio que los trabajadores actuales reciben, dijo.

“¿Por qué tiene el gobernador miedo a pedir a los ricos su porción justa?” preguntó Parrott.

Alrededor de 450,000 contribuyentes en Nueva York reportaron ingresos de más de \$200,000 el año pasado, según el Instituto de Política Fiscal. Un 5 por ciento de residentes ganan un 42 por ciento de los ingresos del estado. Sin embargo, solamente cargan con un 3 por ciento del peso de los nuevos impuestos y cortes presupuestales propuestos, según estima el grupo.

La tasa actual máxima de impuestos sobre los ingresos en el estado de Nueva York, un 6.85 por ciento, aplica a todos ingresos de más de \$40,000 al año. Si el estado aumentara los impuestos sobre ingresos de más de \$250,000, con una nueva tasa máxima de un 10.3 por ciento por ingresos de más de \$1 millón, cobraría \$5 mil millones adicionales al año, dice el Centro para Familias Trabajadoras (Center for Working Families), un grupo político afiliado al Partido de Familias Trabajadoras (Working Families Party). Esta tasa máxima igualaría la de California, pero sería más baja que la tasa máxima del estado durante los años 1970.

“El miedo político realmente no se puede justificar”, dijo Gottfried. Hace años que él ha abogado por aumentar los impuestos de los ricos, dijo, pero recibió la primera carta crítica a esta posición este mes.

Chelsea Residents

continued from page 1

ing Families, a policy group affiliated with the Working Families Party. That top rate would match California's, but would be lower than the state's top rate in the 1970s.

“The political fear is really unjustified,” said Gottfried. He has advocated raising taxes on the rich for years, he said, but got his first letter criticizing that stance this month.

“We need more than taxes on the rich,” Nat Yalowitz of Penn South told Gottfried and Duane. “All we're hearing from the city is ‘cut, cut, cut.’ You have to help us fight to get the money from Washington, D.C.” Officials in both Albany and Washington, he said, have to feel that people have “a very deep anger at what brought us here.”

Many people in the crowd seemed to agree that the problem cannot be solved in Albany alone. The loudest applause came when Duane suggested that a national single-payer health-care plan would save the state billions of dollars in medical expenses for retirees. Gottfried got his biggest hand when he noted that the amount of money the state needs is “a fraction” of what the federal government is spending on the war in Iraq and tax cuts for the rich. “Tell the federal govern-

“Necesitamos más que impuestos para los ricos”, dijo Nat Yalowitz de Penn South a Gottfried y Duane. “Lo único que oímos de la ciudad es ‘corte, corte, corte’. Ustedes deben ayudarnos a luchar para conseguir el dinero de Washington, D.C.”. Los funcionarios tanto en Albany como en Washington, dijo, deben darse cuenta que el pueblo siente “un profundo coraje sobre lo que nos llevó a esta coyuntura”.

Muchos en la multitud parecían estar de acuerdo que el problema no se puede solucionar solamente en Albany. Se suscitaron los aplausos más fuertes cuando Duane sugirió que un sistema nacional de atención médica de un solo pagador ahorraría al estado miles de millones de dólares en gastos médicos para jubilados. Gottfried recibió su más fuerte aplauso cuando señaló que la suma que el estado necesita es “una fracción” de lo que el gobierno federal gasta en la guerra en Irak y los cortes de impuestos para los ricos. “Diga al gobierno federal que corte el presupuesto militar”, gritó una mujer.

Los dos legisladores también instaron a la revocación de las leyes de drogas Rockefeller.

La crisis presupuestal no afectará mucho a la vivienda, dice Duane, ya que poco viene de ayuda estatal directa. Mucho más dinero para viviendas viene de ayuda federal y la Agencia de Financiamiento de Vivienda estatal, explica, frecuentemente por medio de tales manipulaciones financieras

ment to cut the military budget,” a woman called out.

Both legislators also urged repeal of the Rockefeller drug laws.

The budget crisis won't affect housing funding much, says Duane, as not much comes from direct state aid. Far more money for housing comes from federal aid and the state Housing Finance Agency, he explains, often through such complex financial machinations as the sale of tax credits to fund affordable housing. Tight credit is a bigger problem, he added. But if President Obama's economic-stimulus package includes money for housing and the credit market opens up, things will improve. Interest rates are so low now that developers would be willing to borrow money if they could get loans, he says.

One area that will be hurt, however, is legal services, which help many tenants fight eviction and obtain repairs. The Legal Aid Society's housing practice is “completely inundated,” said Legal Aid lawyer Adriene Holder, better known as a tenant representative on the Rent Guidelines Board. The city cut \$6 million in support for legal services this year, she said, and there is no money in Paterson's budget for them.

como la venta de créditos de impuestos para proveer fondos para vivienda asequible. Las restricciones de crédito son un problema más grave, añadió. Sin embargo, si el paquete de estímulos económicos del Presidente Obama incluye dinero para vivienda y se abre el mercado de crédito, las cosas mejorarán. Las tasas de interés son tan bajas ahora que los especuladores estarían dispuestos a pedir prestado dinero si pudieran conseguir préstamos, dice.

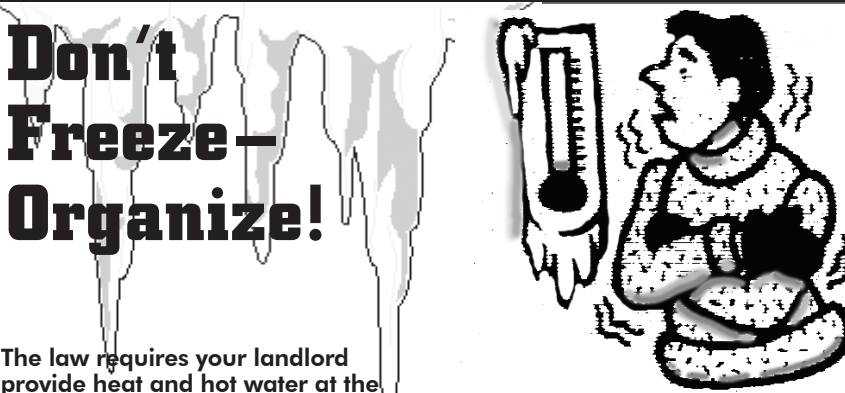
Un área que será dañada, sin embargo, son los servicios legales,

que ayudan a muchos inquilinos a defenderse del desalojo y conseguir reparaciones. El bufete de vivienda de la Sociedad de Ayuda Legal (Legal Aid Society) está “totalmente inundado”, dijo la abogada de Ayuda Legal Adriene Holder, mejor conocida como una representante de los inquilinos en la Junta de Renta Regulada (Rent Guidelines Board). La ciudad cortó \$6 millones del apoyo para servicios legales este año, dijo, y no hay ningún dinero en el presupuesto de Paterson para ellos.

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Don't Freeze—Organize!

The law requires your landlord provide heat and hot water at the following levels from October 1 through May 31:

- From 6 am to 10 pm: If the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature must be at least 68 degrees everywhere in your apartment.
- From 10 pm to 6 am: If the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature must be at least 55 degrees everywhere in your apartment.
- Hot water at a minimum 120 degrees at the tap must be provided 24 hours a day, year round.

If your landlord does not maintain those minimum temperatures, you should:

- * Start an “HP action” in Housing Court. Ask for a court-ordered inspection and an Order to Correct.
- * Call the New York City Central Complaints Bureau at 311 immediately to record the landlord's violation. Call repeatedly. An inspector should eventually come, although sometimes they don't.
- * Get other tenants in your building to call Central Complaint. Everybody should call repeatedly, at least once every day the condition is not corrected.
- * Buy a good indoor/outdoor thermometer and keep a chart of the exact dates, times, and temperature readings, inside and out, so long as the condition is not corrected. The chart is your evidence.
- * Call the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal at (718) 739-6400 and ask them to send you their Heat and Hot Water complaint form.

Get as many other apartments as possible in your building to sign on, demanding an order restoring heat and hot water, and a reduction and freeze (pardon the expression!) in all the rents.

You'll need a strong tenant association to force the landlord to provide heat and hot water. Write and call the landlord and demand repairs or fuel.

Prepare to go on rent strike—but get legal advice first.

The heat laws also provide for:

- * The city's Emergency Repair Department to supply your heat if the landlord does not. (Try waiting for this one!)
- * A \$250 to \$500 a day fine to the landlord for every day of violation. (But the Housing Court rarely imposes these fines, let alone collects them.)
- * A \$1,000 fine to the landlord if an automatic control device is put on the boiler to keep the temperature below the lawful minimum.

If your boiler's fuel tank is empty, tenants have the right to buy their own fuel after 24 hours of no heat and no response from the landlord. But this provision does not apply if the boiler is broken and needs both repairs and fuel.

Caution! Protect your money! If you decide to buy fuel, you must follow special lawful procedures very carefully. You should get help and advice from a tenant organizer.

Because the heat and hot water laws are in the law books does not mean they are enforced by government. Don't freeze to death waiting for the city or state to act. Organize!

State Senate Deal Opens Door for Vacancy Decontrol Repeal

by Kenny Schaeffer

On January 7, Malcolm Smith of Queens was elected majority leader of the New York State Senate, ending more than 40 years of Republican control. This paves the way for the long-awaited strengthening of the state's rent and eviction laws.

Smith's election followed the Democrats' capture of a 32-30 majority in last November's election. It had been placed in some doubt when a "Gang of 3" of renegade senators—Pedro Espada, Jr. and Ruben Diaz, Sr. of the Bronx and Carl Kruger of Brooklyn—threatened to vote with the Republicans unless they were given powerful positions. After several false starts, an agreement was finally reached on Jan. 6, under which Espada was made chair of the housing committee, Kruger was given finance, and Diaz was given aging.

"After decades of rule by Republicans drowning in cash from the big-money real-estate industry, the Democratic takeover of the state Senate is a real breakthrough for advocates of affordable housing and ending vacancy decontrol," declared Dan Cantor, director of the Working Families Party, which helped the Democrats win several key state Senate races. "Our work is far from over, and we won't stop until the Democrats we helped elect deliver on their promises to tenants."

Pedro Espada is not expected to be a friend to tenants. He won the seat in November by defeating incumbent Efrain Gonzalez, Jr., who was under a federal fraud indictment for misappropriating more than \$400,000 which he had steered toward community groups in his district. Espada too remains under a legal cloud. He has a record of flouting campaign-finance requirements that were designed precisely to limit the impact of big money and real-estate interests in the

democratic process.

On Dec. 30, the Appellate Division of State Supreme Court ruled that Espada is personally liable for \$61,750 in fines he incurred rather than release records of contributions to his unsuccessful 2001 campaign for Bronx borough president. In the 2008 election, there was speculation that the Republicans and real-estate interests were bankrolling Espada, as the Rent Stabilization Association made no secret that it saw the likelihood of a Democratic takeover of the state Senate and was willing to buy favor with any cooperative politicians. There is no way to verify who gave Espada money, because he set up a political-action committee instead of the required campaign committee, and then failed to file disclosure forms that were due 32 and 11 days before the election. Those forms would have listed campaign receipts, contributions, transfers, and expenditures to and by political committees.

"Given their respective antics, the primary contest of Gonzalez vs. Espada now shapes up as the toughest taste test since the Iran-Iraq War," Tom Robbins of the *Village Voice* observed in August. Nor is Espada contrite: "No excuses," he told the *New York Times*. "That's part of the business we're in, as they say in the 'Godfather' movies."

Since Espada will not be leading the fight to strengthen rent regulations, the impetus will have to come from Majority Leader Smith, other members of the housing committee, Governor David Paterson, and the Democratic-led Assembly. The task of moving legislation is expected to be easier under a series of rules reforms the Senate is adopting, giving more power to individual members and requiring committee to be more accountable for how they vote on discharging legislation to the floor.

"These rules reforms represent a historic shift in the way the state Senate will function under Democratic leadership," explains Sen. Liz Krueger (D/WFP-Manhattan), a strong supporter of tenants rights. "For decades New Yorkers have been clamoring for an end to

business as usual in Albany. I am proud that after years of my arguing for these changes, we are finally on the path to a fairer and more transparent government that truly serves the people's interests."

Met Council is working with the Real Rent Reform

(R3) campaign and with *Housing Here and Now* to push for repeal of vacancy decontrol in the current legislative session. *Housing Here and Now* is traveling to Albany on January 27 to meet with legislators. If you want to go, write to info@housinghereandnow.org

NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 40)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 2008 through Sept. 30, 2009
Order No. 39, covering leases commencing prior to October 1, 2008,
is available at <http://www.metcouncil.net/campaigns/RGB.htm>

Lease Type	Current Legal Rent	One-year Lease	Two-year Lease	
Renewal Leases	All...	landlord supplies heat	4.5%	8.5%
		tenant pays for heat	4%	8%
	Except where last vacancy lease was 6 or more years ago and rent is below \$1000	landlord supplies heat	\$45	\$85
		tenant pays for heat	\$40	\$80
Vacancy leases	More than \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	16%	20%
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 16%	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%
	Less than \$300	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	16% plus \$100	20% plus \$100
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 16% plus \$100	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20% plus \$100
	Rent \$300 to \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	16% or \$100, whichever is greater	20% or \$100, whichever is greater
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 16%, or \$100, whichever is greater	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%, or \$100, whichever is greater

Renewal Leases

Landlords must offer a rent-stabilized tenant a renewal lease 90 to 120 days before the expiration of the current lease. The renewal lease must keep the same terms and conditions as the expiring lease, except when reflecting a change in the law. Once the renewal offer is received, the tenant has 60 days to accept it and choose whether to renew the lease for one or two years. The owner must return the signed and dated copy to the tenant in 30 days. The new rent does not go into effect until the start of the new lease term, or when the owner returns the signed copy (whichever is later).

Late offers: If the owner offers the renewal late (fewer than 90 days before the expiration of the current lease), the lease term can begin, at the tenant's option, either on the date it would have begun had a timely offer been made, or on the first rent payment date 90 days after the date of the lease offer. The rent guidelines used for the renewal can be no greater than the RGB increases in effect on the date the lease should have begun (if timely offered). The tenant does not have to pay the new rent increase until 90 days after the offer was made.

Sublease Allowance
Landlords can charge a 10 per-

cent increase during the term of a sublease that commences during this guideline period.

Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption Program Rent-stabilized seniors (and those living in rent-controlled, Mitchell-Lama, and limited equity coop apartments), 62 or older, whose disposable annual household income is \$28,000 or less (for 2007 tax year) and who pay (or face a rent increase that would cause them to pay) one-third or more of that income in rent may be eligible for a rent freeze. Apply to: NYC Dept. for the Aging, SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007 or call 311 or visit their Web site, www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie/scrie.shtml.

Disability Rent Increase Exemption Program Rent-regulated tenants receiving eligible disability-related financial assistance who have incomes of \$18,396 or less for individuals and \$26,460 or less for a couple and are facing rents equal to more than one-third of their income may be eligible for a rent freeze. Apply to: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane, 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. Call 311 for an application or go to the Web site at www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml.

Loft Units

Legalized loft-unit increases are 2.5 percent for a one-year lease and 5.25 percent for two years. No vacancy allowance is permitted on vacant lofts.

Hotels and SROs
4.5% for all categories, however, 0% when fewer than 85% of units are occupied by permanent, rent-regulated tenants.

Rent Overcharges

Tenants should be aware that many landlords will exploit the complexities of these guidelines and bonuses—and the tenant's unfamiliarity with the apartment's rent history—to charge an illegal rent. Tenants can challenge unauthorized rent increases through the courts or by filing a challenge with the state housing agency, the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). The first step in the process is to contact the DHCR to see the official record of the rent history. Go to www.dhcr.state.ny.us or call (718) 739-6400 and ask for a detailed rent history. Then speak to a knowledgeable advocate or a lawyer before proceeding.

For previous guidelines, call the RGB at (212) 385-2934 or go to www.housingnyc.com.

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City Housing Policy at Crossroads as HPD Chief Moves to HUD

By Jarrett Murphy

City Housing Commissioner Shaun Donovan's departure to Washington comes as the city's affordable housing plan faces steep challenges. President-elect Barack Obama nominated Donovan Dec. 13 to head the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Affordable housing advocates, analysts, and policymakers have speculated quite a bit about whom Mayor Michael Bloomberg would select to replace Donovan as head of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. But there was wide agreement that the next HPD boss will take office at a critical juncture for affordable housing in the city.

Obama's selection of Donovan was widely praised. Sheila Crowley, president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, called it a "brilliant choice for HUD." Mark Greenberg, executive director of the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing, lauded Donovan's "impressive results" in New York. "It will be a loss for the city but a great asset for our entire country," said City Council member Erik Martin Dilan, chair of the Council's Committee on Housing and Buildings.

Donovan won praise for being a forceful spokesman for affordable housing with an interest in creative solutions involving private market forces. Advocates also say he recognized the impact that the foreclosure crisis was going to have a year before it became a national story. And he recently convened a meeting of affordable-housing stakeholders

to brainstorm ways to respond to the challenges confronting the mayor's plan. Bernard Carr, executive director of the New York State Association for Affordable Housing, praised Donovan for "taking advantage of the combined knowledge of the affordable housing community in New York City and New York State."

Among the rumored candidates for the HPD job are: Housing Development Corporation (HDC) president Marc Jahr; Enterprise Community Partners vice president and former HPD official Raphael Cestero; Alicia Glen of Goldman Sachs' Urban Investment Group, also a former HPD official; HDC and HPD veteran William Traylor of the Riechman Group, a development company; Local Initiatives Support Corporation's New York City managing director Denise Scott; Ford Foundation scholar and former JPMorgan community development guru Mark Willis, and former HPD first deputy commissioner John Warren.

Whoever gets the \$162,800-a-year job to replace Donovan assumes responsibility for 2,700 employees, a \$650 million budget and a portfolio of duties ranging from managing code-enforcement operations, to overseeing anti-abandonment programs, to shepherding the mayor's 10-year, \$7.5 billion plan to build or preserve 165,000 units of affordable housing.

The allure of the job is enhanced by the distinct possibility that Bloomberg will serve a third term. The Council's vote to extend term

limits means that what would have been a 12-month mop-up job at HPD is, instead, a probable five-year stint shaping housing policy.

Rocky road ahead

On the other hand, the challenges facing HPD are growing.

The mayor's housing plan, which was supposed to run through

2013, always faced strict limits on how much it could offset the overall loss of affordable units in the city. For every affordable unit that HPD preserved or built, other units were leaving the Mitchell-Lama program or being priced out of rent stabilization.

Those constraints grew even

continued on page 8

1,000 Tenants

continued from page 1

since 1974.

At the Dec. 9 rally, 13 state legislators pledged to set the repeal of vacancy decontrol as a top priority in 2009 and to talk to the legislative leadership about the need for it. We heard riveting speeches from state Senators Jose Serrano of the Bronx, Tom Duane of Manhattan, and Andrea Stewart-Cousins of Westchester County. The other legislators who signed the pledge were state Senators Liz Krueger and Eric Schneiderman (D-Manhattan), Daniel Squadron (D-Brooklyn), Joe Addabbo (D-Queens), and Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), along with Assembly members Richard Gottfried and Linda Rosenthal (D-Manhattan), Karim Camara and Hakeem Jeffries (D-Brooklyn), and Jose Peralta (D-Queens).

The rally was organized by a broad coalition of housing justice groups and allies under the banner of Housing Here and Now. Housing Here and Now formed four years ago, joining over 150 housing groups, community organizations, religious congregations, and labor unions. Its steering committee for the rally included ACORN, Community Voices Heard, the New York City AIDS Housing Network, New York Immigration Coalition, Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, Tenants & Neighbors, and

the Working Families Party. Many other groups also joined the organizing efforts, mobilizing tenants, getting the word out, and being a part of the planning of the protest. These included Met Council, the Pratt Area Community Council, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Real Rent Reform Campaign, Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens, Queers for Economic Justice, and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice.

This month, organizations that are part of Housing Here and Now will meet with the state senators representing their districts to urge the repeal of vacancy decontrol. The campaign is focusing on 17 senators who have not yet taken a clear public position on the issue. On Jan. 27, tenants will be traveling to Albany to lobby legislators, telling the stories of how the housing crisis affects their lives and neighborhoods.

"Tonight is the night to begin," Liz Gardner of Tenants & Neighbors told the Dec. 9 rally, "Ask your state and local representatives where they stand. Tell the landlord: 'Sir, my raise is not your dividend!'"

Ann Meisinger is an organizer with Housing Here and Now. If you are interested in going to Albany on Jan. 27, call Danielle at (646) 202-3962.

Tenants Mixed but Wary on Donovan's Record

In online discussions of Shaun Donovan's nomination as head of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, tenant activists offered opinions ranging from "fabulous" to "no friend of ours."

"All told, I think he's probably a good choice for HUD," said a longtime Upper West Side Mitchell-Lama activist. "He seems to be very good at developing new housing, quite a bit of which is affordable (if not to all the levels that I would prefer), and he has modified HPD's stance so that it is now more difficult for HPD-supervised developments to leave Mitchell-Lama." On the other hand, she said, he was less interested in protecting rent regulations, and it would be hard to imagine Mayor Bloomberg replacing him with "someone who is MORE supportive of rent regulation."

"I think he's fabulous," said a Manhattan Plaza tenant leader. "He did his utmost to help Manhattan Plaza remain affordable after its sale to Related. He was

accessible to many tenant organizations."

Others were less optimistic. "Beware," warned a Knickerbocker Village tenant. "He assisted DHCR and the owners of Knickerbocker Village in their efforts to try to deregulate Knickerbocker Village. No friend of ours."

"HPD has always been on the side of the landlord," wrote an Independence Plaza North tenant. "He basically helped the landlord and not the residents of IPN when our building was sold to our new landlord."

On a deeper level, tenants are concerned that the foreclosure crisis has far overshadowed the shortage of affordable rental housing. Neither Barack Obama nor John McCain mentioned rental housing during the campaign.

"It couldn't hurt to at least let [Obama] know that we are concerned about RENTALS," the woman from IPN wrote. "That housing is NOT just mortgages."

—Steven Wishnia

Senior and Disabled Tenants

Seniors, 62 or older, in rent-regulated, Mitchell-Lama and some other housing programs whose disposable annual household income is \$28,000 or less (for the previous year) and who pay (or face a rent increase that would cause them to pay) one-third or more of that income in rent may be eligible for a Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE). Apply to:

The NYC Dept of the Aging
SCRIE Unit
2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007.

Disabled tenants receiving eligible disability-related financial assistance with incomes of \$18,396 or less for individuals and \$26,460 or less for a couple facing rents equal to or more than one-third of their income may be eligible for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE). Apply to:

NYC Dept. of Finance
DRIE Exemptions
59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor
New York, NY 10038

DRIE and SCRIE info is available on the city's website www.nyc.gov, or call 311.

HPD to HUD

continued from page 7

tighter when construction costs rose amid a local and global building boom. Then, as HPD moved from a phase of the plan that emphasized preservation to one dominated by new construction, land costs began to bite. By late 2007, the Independent Budget Office was warning that the city's capital contribution "is sufficient to fund slightly less than half—49 percent—of the units needed to meet new construction targets."

In fiscal year 2008, HPD hit its targets for housing starts, but while it launched 25 percent more "preservation starts" than expected, the number of "construction starts" missed the target by 22 percent. According to the Mayor's Management Report, this was "due to limitations on available tax-exempt financing and a tightening construction-financing market, particularly in neighborhoods experiencing high rates of foreclosure." The mayor recently hinted that the plan might take an extra year.

According to Jerilyn Perine, executive director of the Citizens Housing and Planning Council and Donovan's predecessor at HPD, the housing plan faces a perfect storm in which all three underpinnings of affordable housing development—government spending, private-sector investment and bank lending—are all pulling back because of the economic crisis. "The challenge really is how to keep your housing program growing—how to potentially rethink some aspects of it," Perine says. That means using government money strategically, and in a way to keep alive the vibrant and valuable affordable housing industry that New York has developed over the past 30 years. It also means bracing for criticism in how scarce dollars are allocated. "In troubled economic times, government money comes under greater scrutiny," she adds. "I mean, the mayor's closing firehouses. He's making very tough choices."

HPD could choose to shift money from construction projects to preservation efforts. The plan calls for 92,000 units of new construction and 73,000 units of preservation, which covers everything from physical rehabilitation

of deteriorating affordable units to refinancing Mitchell-Lama developments to prevent their owners from leaving the program, which keeps rents low. HPD could decide that rather than spending on land and construction to build new units, it will focus solely on defending units that are already affordable.

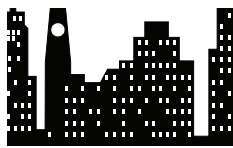
Some advocates, however, would prefer to see HPD get more ambitious in the face of crisis—to take advantage of falling land prices to "recap some of what we've lost to the market in the past few years," as one advocate put it, who did not want to be identified because of the delicate politics surrounding the HPD appointment.

Either approach faces challenges. Shifting to preservation can change the income groups that benefit from HPD programs, says Carr. But, he adds, continuing to fund construction means encountering land and materials costs that, so far, have stabilized but not fallen. In general, "It's the best of times and the worst of times for affordable housing," Carr says, because awareness of housing needs is high even as resources for housing are being squeezed. He cites a recent increase of state funding for housing that had to be used to shore up development projects outside New York City when private investors refused to back the deals.

It's not like the housing plan is the only part of HPD's workload that involves tough choices. Community Service Society housing analyst Victor Bach says he hopes the next HPD boss also pays attention to tenant protections. But Bloomberg's November round of cuts reduced funding for HPD's tenant anti-harassment program by \$300,000.

Public housing, urban policy

The New York City Housing Authority, meanwhile, is struggling to deal with years of underfunding by the federal, state, and city governments. Despite layoffs, the closure of community centers, and a drastic plan to use Section 8 vouchers to pay for public housing, the au-



thority is still facing nine-digit deficits this year and in future years, leading some critics to call for the privatization of some of its 179,000-unit portfolio. It's unclear what mark acting commissioner Ricardo Morales, who took charge of NYCHA after Tino Hernandez stepped down Dec. 12, will make on this situation. His appointment is technical in nature, as NYCHA continues its national search for a permanent leader, according to Reginald H. Bowman, chair of the Citywide Council of Presidents of NYCHA

residents' associations.

Obama's position papers and the Democratic platform called for a restoration of full federal funding for public housing, but it remains to be seen whether the incoming administration will deliver. Besides the HPD and NYCHA posts, housing advocates wonder who will be selected to run public housing under Donovan at HUD.

A longer version appeared in City Limits Weekly, www.citylimits.org. Reprinted with permission.

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- LOWER EAST SIDE BRANCH at Cooper Square Committee**
61 E. 4th St. (btwn. 2nd Ave. & Bowery)
Tuesdays 6:30 pm
- CHELSEA COALITION ON HOUSING**
Covers 14th St. to 30th St., 5th Ave. to the Hudson River.
322 W. 17th St. (basement), CH3-0544
Thursdays 7:30 pm
- GOLES (Good Old Lower East Side)**
171 Avenue B (between 10 and 11 St.)
by appointments only except for emergencies. 212-533-2541.
- HOUSING COMMITTEE OF RENA**
Covers 135th St. to 165th St. from Riverside Dr. to St. Nicholas Ave.,
537 W. 156th St.
Thursdays 8 pm
- LOWER MANHATTAN LOFT TENANTS**
St. Margaret's House, Pearl & Fulton Sts.,
212-539-3538
Wednesdays 6 pm-7 pm
- MIRABAL SISTERS**
618 W. 142nd St., 212-234-3002
Saturdays 1 - 4 pm
- PRATT AREA COMMUNITY COUNCIL**
201 DeKalb Ave., Brooklyn,
718-522-2613 ext. 24
3rd Wednesday 6 pm
- VILLAGE INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS**
26 Perry St. (basement), 212-741-2994
Wednesdays 6 pm
- WEST SIDE TENANTS UNION**
4 W. 76 St.; 212-595-1274
Tuesday & Wednesday 6-7 pm
- HOUSING CONSERVATION COORDINATORS**
777 10 Ave.; 212-541-5996
Mondays 7-9 pm
- NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS**
Covers Sunset Park and surrounding neighborhoods
443 39 St., Ste. 202, Brooklyn
By appointment only. 718-686-7946, ext. 10
- QUEENS COMMUNITY HOUSE**
Forest Hills Community Center,
10825 62nd Dr., Forest Hills
(718) 592-5757, ext. 280
Mondays and Wednesdays ... 9:30-11 am
- QUEENS COMMUNITY HOUSE**
Pomonok Community Center,
6709 Kissena Blvd., Flushing
(718) 591-6060
Fridays 10 am-12 pm



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ON HOUSING

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Address _____ Apt. No. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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